

Entertainment Programming and the Nostalgia Content Trend

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Entertainment programming has consistently delivered on the nostalgia and retro trend, driving viewing and engaging audiences.

For several seasons, the nostalgia and retro programming trend has been growing within the scripted content landscape. Linear and digital platforms have invested in drama series which have an established history with viewers, with hit series returning with their original cast (*The X Files*, *Will & Grace*), whilst others are redeveloped for a new generation (*Magnum PI*, *MacGyver*, *Lost in Space*). In the flush of annual commissions the importance of non-scripted programming in schedules is often overlooked, however entertainment has consistently delivered on the nostalgia trend for far longer, providing schedule tent poles for broadcasters and delivering live, engaged audiences for advertisers. Those formats which successfully return year after year do so because they deliver both for broadcasters and for viewers; for viewers they are familiar, dependable and entertaining points of viewing amid the myriad of content offerings; for broadcasters, they bring in significant, engaged audiences within the key live plus same day and live plus three viewing windows.

Established entertainment delivers.

American Idol is a great example. After being off-air for less than two years, the show returned to US television screens in 2018 for its sixteenth season. The show's value for both broadcasters and viewers was immediately apparent; *American Idol* delivered ABC's highest rated Sunday night premiere in four years and commanded a reported \$200,000 for a thirty second spot. The show highlighted that content, not platform, is king – with audiences and advertising dollars following the entertainment format to its new network and new night. The data clearly shows that viewers had been missing the annual event's appearance in their TV schedule, with the original reality competition show returning to its roots – delivering a nostalgic viewing experience that deals with universal truths and the American dream.

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American Idol, ©ABC/Craig Sjodin

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Viewers continue to frame their viewing schedules around these unmissable, long-running entertainment formats. As *American Idol* delivers viewers on ABC, *The Voice*, now in its fourteenth season, continues to bring in viewers for NBC. *Dancing with the Stars* (ABC) delivered viewers in its twenty-sixth season, with a junior version commissioned for the 2018/19 season, driving both the audience that has grown with the show and aiming to bring it to a new generation. *America's Got Talent* has delivered for over twelve seasons, achieving its highest performance to date and ranking as the number one most watched entertainment series of the 2016/17 season. *America's Got Talent* also delivers on the nostalgia of people chasing their dreams, driving summer audiences and ad spend. Building on this audience engagement, *America's Got Talent: Champions* will launch in the upcoming Winter season, providing further points in the schedule for audiences to engage.

Nostalgia and retro programming drives viewing.

During the summer season, when viewers have proven to be more elusive, nostalgia programming can absolutely drive viewing. Building a night around retro game show brands, in the case of ABC's Sunday *Fun & Games*, boosted viewing levels, achieving the network's highest summer Sunday night ratings in ten years and creating a destination viewing evening in the typically lower summer viewing period. All the shows in this block first aired over forty years ago; *Match Game* for example last aired new episodes seventeen years prior. Tapping into this family-friendly, established programming enhances viewer engagement and boosts the live TV appeal. Audiences are more likely to view a show either within the live plus same day or live plus three environment, making this a strong strategy for driving broadcaster ad revenue and attracting major brands.



American Idol, ©ABC/Craig Sjoedin

Innovation is key.

Although these shows have an established heritage with viewers, there is no room for stale or stagnant formats. Striving for innovation while honouring a show's DNA is key. In 2018, *American Idol* drove innovation into its return by becoming the first reality competition series to allow viewers to watch and vote simultaneously across all time zones. The impact of this strategy increased the week on week audience by fifteen per cent, leading to more engaged viewers nationwide, removing the issue of spoilers, and allowing both coasts to see the outcome in real time.

In a crowded content landscape, established entertainment brands continue to command a live engaged audience, serving as the framework around viewers' TV schedules. The combination of nostalgia and innovation drives more engaged viewers watching within the key live plus same day and live plus three viewing periods, with more than eighty per cent of entertainment show viewing taking place live plus same day, and nearly fifteen per cent catching up within three days. These elements are key for brands who seek engaged, high-volume audiences, allowing scalable campaigns to be built around these annual events. **X**

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